



Congresswoman Stephanie Murphy
Statement for the Record
To Honor the Life of Greg Wood
November 8, 2017

Mr. Speaker:

I rise to honor the life of one of my constituents, Greg Wood, who passed away on October 14, 2017, at the age of 70.

In tribute to Greg, who served in the United States Marine Corps and was wounded in action during the Vietnam War, my office arranged for an American flag to be flown over the U.S. Capitol. I am so glad that our country raised the flag in Greg's honor, because Greg did so much to support and defend this country. Greg fought to protect the fundamental freedoms that our flag represents.

This Saturday is Veterans Day, when our nation pauses to express gratitude to all those who honorably served, both living and departed. The day before, I will attend a ceremony at the Park Maitland School in Orlando, where we will formally present the flag to Greg's widow, Donna. Donna was kind enough to talk to my office about her late husband, about what mattered most to him, and about how he lived his life.

Greg was many things—a Texan at heart despite spending most of his life in the Sunshine State; a well-educated man who earned a master's degree in finance; an adventure-seeker who once rode his motorcycle from the United States all the way down to Panama; a respected commercial real estate broker; a sports lover; a fisherman and a hunter; and a pillar of our central Florida community.

But, as Donna made crystal clear, Greg was—above all—a U.S. Marine and a family man. These two roles defined him. They were the core of who he was. They gave his life purpose and meaning.

In a speech that he delivered many years ago to members of the Marine Corps, President Ronald Reagan said: "Some people spend an entire lifetime wondering if they made a difference in the world. But the Marines don't have that problem."

Greg volunteered to serve in the Marine Corps in March 1966, when he was only 18 years old. After basic training, Greg was sent to Vietnam, where he served as a forward observer—directing artillery fire onto enemy targets. Working as a forward observer, especially in Vietnam, was an exceptionally dangerous job.

The Marines are famous for their bravery, discipline and toughness. Greg was a Marine's Marine—respected and even revered by his brothers in arms for his courage and commitment. Despite his youth, Greg was a natural leader of men. They followed him, and they trusted him. Some even thought he might be invincible, and did not want to go out on patrols unless Greg was going with them.

Friendships forged in war are uniquely deep and intense. Greg lost many good friends in Vietnam—and, as Donna tells us, he carried these losses with him for the remainder of his life. On some days, the memories haunted Greg, and he struggled with feelings of sadness and guilt. Like any warrior who has seen his fellow warriors fall, Greg naturally asked himself: “Why them and not me?”

Physically, as well as psychologically, Greg did not leave Vietnam unscathed. One fateful day, while out on a mission, he was shot and critically wounded—earning a Purple Heart. When Greg awoke hours later in a military hospital, a priest was administering his last rites. Although he survived, doctors told him he was unlikely to live past age 35. In a sense, then, Greg's entire life was one big case of beating the odds.

After being honorably discharged from the Marines, Greg was determined to become successful professionally and personally—in part to honor his fallen comrades who never had the chance to build a career or a family of their own. As Donna told us, nearly everything that Greg did later in life was shaped by his formative experience in Vietnam, whether for better or for worse.

One of Greg's daughters, Kristina, told me that her father loved war movies, but they always made him cry. It is clear that Greg had complex feelings about war itself, but that he cherished the American soldiers, sailors, airmen and—of course—Marines who fought these wars. It didn't matter whether they served in World War II, Korea, Vietnam, Afghanistan, or Iraq. He felt a sacred bond with all of them.

In addition to his military family, of course, Greg treasured his own family—which includes Donna, four children, and eight grandchildren. By all accounts, he was a loving husband and father, who coached Little League, served as a Boy Scout leader, and did all the big things and little things that great dads do.

So, I hope Greg has been reunited with the friends he lost in Vietnam. I hope he is happy and at peace. And I hope he knows how much his life mattered to his family and to the country he so nobly served.